

**So, can you let me know what your name is and the organisation that you work for?**

My name is Danielle Taylor and I work for the Citadel Youth Centre.

And my name is Sandra Brown and I work for the Citadel Youth Centre.

**Thank you so much. Can you describe the work that your organisation does?**

**Sandra:** As a whole we are a youth centre. We run lots of different groups for young people [and] children in the evenings. We also have young mums, we have a family group [and] some of us work in primary schools and some of us work in secondary schools. We also do some intergenerational work with some old people. A broad spectrum.

**Danni:** Yeh, just the same We are a community organisation supporting pretty much from birth right up to the elderly and everything in between. [We are] a youth organisation and have been in Leith for the last 42 years I believe, 43 years I think we are this year. It's a very, very well-known organisation in the Leith community and we are very, very popular and well used. Our services are popular services.

**Thats brilliant. Thank you both. So you'll probably want to take turns with this question and I don't know who wants to go first, but if you could talk a little bit about what your role is within your organisation.**

**Danni:** So my role is the PEF (Pupil Equity Fund) family worker for Leith Primary school. I am based in the Leith Primary School two days per week supporting families generally parents [and] working directly with parents with varied issues, generally with emotional and practical support. Also one day per week I work in the Citadel Youth Centre with Sandra running a drop in for parents and carers whose children attend Citadel Youth Services.

**Sandra:** I am also a family worker and based in Trinity and Victoria primary schools and I also support families who use Citadel, mainly primary age. And then myself and Danni run a parents carers weekly group in the Citadel.

**Thank you so much. And for the both of you, in your experience, how have things changed since the 2020 covid pandemic and the current cost of living crisis. So, for the people you support but also for yourselves. How has that impacted your work?**

**Danni:** Ok, so I, first of all, am going to talk about how this has impacted the families that we work with. So one thing for me that I am seeing on the ground is that families are really struggling to just provide the essential items. So you are talking, food, fuel, clothing, the basic needs are barely being met which means that there is little to no money left over to just take part in society. You know just to do things with their kids, take them to the zoo if they wanted, take them to the park with a picnic, these things all cost money. And that's something that we are really seeing on the ground that because of the essential items are the priority for families, anything above and beyond that is just not possible for them right now. So the isolation that we are seeing is quite clear; lack of opportunities for children to have new experiences and try new things, particularly around cultural fun things they can do. That's one thing that I'm very much seeing in my role.

**Sandra:** I think I'm seeing it's had a really big impact on mental health. Often, we are supporting the parents and carers because of the impact; you think of the isolation of covid and also a lot of what the children have missed out for these times that we were in lockdown has had an impact. So I'd say mental health. I mean we have had some positives. Weve mentioned our parents' group that we do

and its very well attended and we've been noted from our other colleagues how nice the atmosphere is and they're very supportive. I think after the lockdown, its testimony to us that we kept in touch with them throughout. But they were keen to come back and be together and that really connected us in a community and [the] peer support that they really need.

**Danni:** Our group numbers seemed to increase in the aftermath of covid which was quite interesting to us, and we can see that as a need of reconnecting. There's also something else as well and that's something that Sandra can agree with is that there's been a lot of non-engagement for children at school. So a lot of children who have been through school during covid, non-attendance and then re-integrating into society again has been particularly challenging. So it's something we are seeing; attendance and isolation for children as well is something we are definitely supporting parents around.

**Sandra:** Yeh I think from just working in the schools you do see the inequality for children that haven't been particularly well supported, it's really tough. We are seeing in school now through behaviours and [them] just behind their peers, it's going to be hard to catch up.

**Thanks so much. That kind of leads me on to what I was going to ask about, which is what the main challenges are in your work. Obviously you have started to touch on that and other challenges faced by the people that you support but could you talk more about what the main the challenges are?**

**Sandra:** I would say that the main challenges are a lot of the structural issues and inequalities that our families face every day. Benefits getting stopped or I think I've said this before but wanting to look for work but actually as soon as they do, their benefits are taken away. Housing remains a big one. Lots of families living in overcrowded houses want to stay in the areas that they have been brought up in, the area that they got a community [and] support and finding that that's not what they are going to get offered, they're going to get offered out of the community. So for me it's a lot of the kind of structural inequalities that are affecting families.

**Danni:** Absolutely and I think that ties in sort of with what we are seeing is that community-based work, generally speaking I feel like, historically, community-based work is community developmental work. And social work, they would be dealing with sort of higher tariff cases with high level of needs that develops into child protection concerns. And what we're seeing, because of the structural issues and austerity, that statutory services such as social work are so stretched that we as community workers on the ground are dealing with some high tariff families that have got some really high needs. That's quite a challenge for us because we are limited. We've got limitations within our resources, and that's something that seems to be challenge that we definitely face today.

**Thanks for sharing that, I know it's not easy to talk about the challenges especially at a time where the challenges seem to be getting bigger? So I just want to really thank you for talking about that. What is rewarding about the work that you do?**

**Sandra:** I do think that we are always outcome based [and] we can build a relationship. I think we talked about our parent's group and how that's evolved [and that] has been really good for people wanting to come along every day. So I think just remaining relationship based is really nice. And being in the schools. Being in the local schools is very positive for the families, seeing us in the schools and then their children come to the Citadel so there's [a] kind of community, it's all connected.

**Danni:** For me, I guess the job satisfaction I get is the impact, when you see the progression for families. And that can be really, really small and it can take a long, long time but when see that

process and throughout that process you see families becoming empowered as well I think is something for me. I do get a lot of joy out of seeing movements no matter how small they are.

**You do fantastic work, you really, really do. What would help in your role, what would help to make that role easier?**

**Sandra:** Well I think the structural policies, if a lot of that was eradicated, that would really help.

**Danni:** Absolutely. More funding, so more money. More funding for us but then generally speaking on a structural level, less austerity. The Government needs to be funding communities, they need to be funding individuals. So generally speaking more funding for public services, more funding for third sector and more value actually, maybe a little bit more credit and value in the third sector and recognising the value in the work that we do and funding that.

**Sandra:** I think also just a switch in society would be nice about how we value. I'd say if somebody is doing the best they can to bring up their children that should be valued you know. Where obviously it's all about capitalism and money which is hard.

**Danni:** Quite conversely, I think the goal is to not be in this job, do you know what I mean (laughs). You know that would be the outcome so for us to not be here.

**We often say that as well for us not to be needed, or at least not be needed in the way that we are needed now, you know. So you're the second person as well as ourselves to say that the ideal goal is not to be needed and to not have to be here. What are your hopes for the future? For your own work and for the people that you support.**

**Sandra:** I think for my own work it would be, and I think Danni sort of talked about it, more development work, doing some groups. And I'm quite keen on parents and carers looking at their own personal development, maybe looking at values and their self-esteem but also understanding the bigger picture and what impacts them. Because I think sometimes, as Danni mentioned, we are maybe firefighting or [in] crisis so sometimes it would be nice to get to do a bit more development work.

**Danni:** Ok, so I feel that this is a bit generic and a bit big but just to generally have an equal and fairer society. I feel like it's a big goal, but it is the key main goal for me.

**Sandra:** That would be nice!

**Danni:** Yeh!

**Yeh that's beautiful. I also share that goal. And finally, so for both of you, what does Edinburgh mean to you?**

**Danni:** I think Edinburgh is a very vibrant, Scottish city however it's got lots of wealth disparity. And I think that is so clear when you come to Edinburgh, and I can speak as someone who grew up in Edinburgh. I'm often asked by non-Edinburgh people if I'm even from Edinburgh cause I don't sound like I am (laughs). Which is quite an interesting thing when we consider I grew up a 15-minute journey from the city centre and I think that's quite indicative of the disparity of wealth in Edinburgh itself. And of many cities in the UK but you know it's something I would see in Edinburgh.

**Sandra:** I think that it is a vibrant city and I also think that some of the decisions that are getting made are not the right ones at the moment and they need to be re-addressed [re.] poverty. We are a big city and this shouldn't be happening.

**Thank you both so much. If someone wants to learn more about the work that you do how can they do that?**

Sandra: Well we have a website. You can follow us on Twitter, you can follow us on Facebook, on Instagram. You could also just email in and ask if you can visit or find out a bit more about us.

**Thats brilliant, thank you both so much. Thats really, really your time and just really great to talk to you both aswell. So thank you so much.**